1. Message from Ana L. Droscoski, Esq.

Welcome back! I hope everyone had a wonderful break, and that Spring 2019 semester has started well.

Now is great time to start researching and applying to positions for this summer. While it can be challenging for an undergraduate to obtain a position in a legal setting, as you are often competing with law students, it has been done many times before and entirely possible. So cast the net wide, and send out as many inquiries, and apply to as many positions as you can! Also use your network – you never know where an informational interview might lead! And use the resources available to you at Hopkins, specifically the Career Center.

For those graduating and looking for a gap year(s) opportunity, consider legal assistant/paralegal positions at a law firm, such as the opportunity listed in Section 3.

2. Legal Education & the Legal Industry in the Media


3. OPPORTUNITY: LEGAL ASSISTANT POSITIONS IN LITIGATION, GENERAL PRACTICE, AND COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE AT SULLIVAN & CROMWELL LLP

Sullivan & Cromwell LLP is currently hiring legal assistants for their Litigation, General Practice, and Commercial Real Estate departments. Please use this link for further information. Those interested are encouraged to submit their applications as soon as possible.

Several Hopkins alumni are currently legal assistants, including the interviewee in this issue, Emily Pastrana '18 (see below). They will all gladly speak with any students interested in the position(s). Legal assistant work is a great way to gain experience in a legal setting, build your network, and provide insight into what it means to be a practicing attorney.

4. INTERVIEW: EMILY PASTRANA ’18, CORPORATE FINANCE LEGAL ASSISTANT

Emily Pastrana is the daughter of Cuban immigrants who moved to Miami, Florida shortly before she was born. The first in her family to go to college, she entered Hopkins knowing that she wanted to major in International Studies. She graduated with honors in 2018, double majoring in Latin American Studies while also minoring in both History and Entrepreneurship & Management. She uses all four of her areas of study in her current role.
Throughout her four years at Hopkins, Emily worked at the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Center for Student Success. She was also an active member of the Catholic Community, the Johns Hopkins Model United Nations Conference (JHUMUNC), and a mentor as part of the Mentoring Assistance Peer Program (MAPP). Emily studied abroad in both Brazil and Italy and conducted research for her honors thesis in Cuba.

During her years at Hopkins, Emily interned at the House of Representatives for former Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and volunteered for Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services. After graduation, Emily went on to work as a Corporate Finance Legal Assistant at Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, a law firm in New York.

Describe a day in the life of a Corporate Finance Legal Assistant.

My days are pretty varied. All legal assistants within the General Practice are assigned to at least one practice group and handle assignments related to that area. In my case, I am assigned to Capital Markets, Project Finance, and Sovereign Issuers. Attorneys from my practice groups often reach out directly; however, I have been able to work on deals in most of the firm’s practice areas, including litigation.

Assignments frequently include completing definitions and cross-reference checks of documents, finding and assembling relevant documents prior to transaction closings, conducting preliminary due diligence review, sourcing economic data for the firm’s sovereign issuer clients, and precedent legal research.

Most recently, I joined a pilot program working with the firm’s business development department. As part of this role, I assist with maintaining and establishing new client relationships, which frequently includes conducting research involving different legal industries, market trends, news updates, geographic locations of interest, and peer firms.

What made you choose this particular position and has it met your expectations?

As I was looking for broad exposure to the different practices of law, I appreciated the firm’s generalist approach to training its lawyers. I was also very impressed by the firm’s hand in some of the country’s most noteworthy industrial, commercial, and financial transactions, as well as its dedication to tackling difficult and unprecedented cases. During my interview I met with attorneys who were interested in the same types of challenging and innovative work I was looking for and decided that this was the place for me.

I would definitely say that my experience so far has surpassed my expectations. I’ve been able to try a bit of everything the firm has to offer. Yes, some aspects of the job are more tedious than others, but I’ve enjoyed getting to see which assignments and practice groups I am more interested in while also learning how to effectively complete assignments I find less enticing. Moreover, the Legal Assistant program at S&C is well-developed and spearheaded by supervisors who care about maximizing the legal assistant experience and positioning legal assistants for whatever career path they choose—whether or not it relates to the law. In an environment that can often be very stressful and fast-paced, it has been helpful to have a support system among my peers and supervisors.
Did you pursue anything else during your interim years before beginning law school? How did you go about researching each of these opportunities?

During the summer before my senior year, I was faced with a similar anxiety to that of several of my soon-to-be-graduating peers: what am I going to do with my life? After serious contemplation and time spent volunteering for a legal services clinic, I decided that I was interested in attending law school. However, I didn't know enough about law school or what being a lawyer would entail. So, I decided to dedicate the rest of my time at Hopkins to prepare myself for a legal career, including researching legal assistant positions. I wanted a glimpse of the path I was thinking of taking before deciding to invest time, energy, and resources into law school.

What do you think you have gained from the experiences and from taking time off before law school? Given the choice, would you do it again?

Absolutely! Choosing to work at a law firm before applying to law school has not only solidified my desire to attend law school but also has better prepared me to be a lawyer down the road. Every day, I get to learn about a variety of deals the firm takes on and work alongside talented attorneys who specialize in different practice areas. I see the hours attorneys put in-and am learning how to achieve a proper work-life balance that is appropriate for me. By the time I enter law school, I will be familiar with the material we will review and the skills necessary to succeed in my classes; likewise, by the time I graduate from law school to work at a law firm, I will have experienced what it is to work at a large law firm-an experience many first years cannot claim and struggle with -, an experience that will only work to my advantage moving forward. My time at the firm has also allowed me to refine several skills that will serve me well in the future, including time-management, attentiveness, and effective communication. In short, working as a legal assistant has been a great opportunity for both personal and professional development.

What types of undergraduate opportunities did you pursue that led to your decision to apply to law school? Were there any other experiences that you felt were particularly helpful in strengthening your application to law school?

As an undergraduate, I tried to take classes that would prepare me for corporate law. This included taking legal-related courses, such as “Business Law” and “The Law and the Internet”, business-related courses such as “Business Analytics” and “Financial Accounting” and “International Marketing”, and courses beneficial to my professional development from the Center for Leadership Education (CLE), such as “Negotiation and Conflict Resolution” and “Principles of Management.” I would also recommend studying a foreign language at Hopkins, as language skills are highly valuable at big law firms. I have been able to use my skills in Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian to varying degrees in my position. Finally, the opportunity to volunteer at an immigration legal services clinic was a great introduction to both the practice of law and its practitioners. My experience at the clinic also led me to be involved with pro-bono work at the firm-another interesting aspect of working at a law firm.

Contact Information:
5. UPCOMING PRE-LAW STUDENT MEETINGS & PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND FRANCIS KING CAREY SCHOOL OF LAW

PROSPECTIVE STUDENT EVENTS

A long list of law school visits, webinars, in-person class visits, open houses and information sessions: [https://www.law.umaryland.edu/Prospective-Students/JD/Visits-and-Webinars/](https://www.law.umaryland.edu/Prospective-Students/JD/Visits-and-Webinars/)

UPCOMING LSAT ADMINISTRATIONS

**Dates:** March 30, 2019 / June 3, 2019 / July 15, 2019

**Testing Locations:** [http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/testing-locations](http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/testing-locations)

**Register:** [https://www.lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/registering-lsat](https://www.lsac.org/lsat/taking-lsat/registering-lsat)

JHU PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS AND ADVISING OFFICE STAFF

Kelli R. Johnson, J.D., Director
Ana L. Droscoski, J.D., Associate Director
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The Administrative Coordinators are available to answer questions regarding your file:

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For students whose last name begins with A-L, contact Mrs. Krause.

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Pre-Professional Advising helps students make informed decisions in their pre-health or pre-law course planning and navigate the application process.